

# Encouraging innovation



**Tata Innovista transform diverse companies to function under one style of management**

**T**ata Innovista was instituted as a “process to multiply innovation,” says Sunil Sinha, chief operating officer, Tata Quality Management Systems. First started in 2006, the purpose of the awards is three-fold, according to Sinha; first, they are to “recognise innovation and bring it to the fore” of the Tata group. Second, they are to “enable and empower common line managers” and bring innovation beyond the purview of the research and development division of companies. Third, they help promote and foster a culture of risk-taking in the group. Innovista falls under the umbrella of the Tata Group Innovation Forum (TGIF), which was formed in 2007 under the leadership of R. Gopalakrishnan, director, Tata Sons.

Suresh Lulla, founder and managing director, Qimpro Consultants, who has been a judge of the awards, and worked closely with Tata companies, explains that Ratan Tata highlighted the spirit and importance of innovation, when he took over the reins at the group. “Fundamentally, they have adapted the Malcolm Baldrige model,” he says of the Tata group, adding that it has aided the “transformation of diverse companies” to function under one style of management. This was especially

significant when Ratan Tata inherited the company, he says, because at the time the various subsidiaries of the group had been run by different people employing different styles of management and organisation. The underlying core value which was adopted at Tata was that of “managing for innovation”.

In light of this, Ravi Arora, vice-president, innovation, Tata Quality Management Services, explains the various ways in which innovation has been brought to the forefront at the Tata group under TGIF. He elucidates that the first and most important aspect of the process is the idea, and so, to help companies generate innovative ideas, the group instituted a social platform called Innoverse, where employees of the various Tata companies could post ideas and exchange, discuss, and join forces to execute them. Innoverse was established three years ago. Another vehicle used to generate ideas at Tata is the Challenges Worth Solving programme where Tata companies identify challenges or problems they face, and seek inputs from all the group companies to shape solutions for these.

Arora also underscores the importance of taking risks, and staking money and manpower behind an idea once it is formed. This aspect is reflected in the group’s Dare To Try programme, which aims to fund audacious, risky ideas that failed to obtain desirable

results. He notes that collaboration too is vital when executing an idea, and this is where the diversity of the Tata group comes in handy; in cases such as the Challenges... programme, problems plaguing certain companies are thrown open to the entire group, so as to leverage its diversity, and come up with creative solutions. The group also has an Innoclusters, and a forum for all chief technology officers, where employees of the group can meet to discuss and trade ideas. The Innometer, Arora adds, is a scale by which companies are measured regarding their extent of innovation.

## For a better life

For the Innovista awards, the first level of selection is done through an online system by around 300 senior Tata managers from 30 companies. The second round is at a regional level, at nine Tata Network Forums that take place all over the world, at Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Jamshedpur, Pune, London, Washington DC, Bangkok, Shanghai. Regional winners participate in the final in Mumbai. This year, winners were chosen by a panel of 16 judges, including Anand Kripalu, managing director, Cadbury India, and Rajeesh Vaidya, president, DuPont South Asia & ASEAN. Winners are chosen in four categories: product innovations, service innovations, core process innovations, and support process innovations.

In 2013, Tata companies have successfully introduced and implemented 1,305 different ideas and innovations that accrued benefits for the group’s companies. Sinha explains that there are essentially two main ideas that drive innovation within the group. “The key is to innovate products for the bottom of the pyramid,” he says, explaining that Tata companies aim to make their products affordable so as to heighten the quality of life of those that might not otherwise be able avail of them. The second priority is to innovate in a way that is competitive in the global context, and that makes Tata companies take places amongst the leading companies of the world.

♦ MANSI MEHTA

## TOP INNOVATIONS

### Product

Tata Global Beverages and Rallis India; Special mention – Tata Motors

### Service Innovations

Two entries from Tata Consultancy Services won in this category

### Core process

Tata Power and two entries from Tata Steel won in this category

### Support Process

Jaguar Land Rover; special mention – Titan Industries